

THE BUILDER,

NO. XXXII.

SATURDAY, JULY 15, 1843.

A most important movement is about being made in building matters, which it would be well for our readers and a large class of our fellow-countrymen to look on with a scrutinizing and a calculating eye. We do not pretend to the gift of prophecy, but we could almost venture to predict that a mania is about to set in for building societies; and, though it may be urged that "it is an ill wind that blows nobody good," and that the good may possibly flow direct into the hands of the builders, yet we are sure that the patriotism of our class is not at so low an ebb as to wish to reap profit by the loss or the delusions of any section of their fellow-countrymen. We have no fear for building societies rightly constituted; but we look with suspicion upon all those where trafficking in shares is so much encouraged, and where a sort of "Derby raffle" is set on foot, with its one or two grand prizes and a hundred blanks; or where the cunning and the scheming make up "their book," and fatten upon premiums for preference, which the sanguine aspirant is induced to give, to secure an early possession of his freehold. It is always thus with every thing good—it is liable to abuse, and will be abused. Against this we warn our countrymen. Prudence is one of the cardinal virtues; but, while we say prudence, we would not, on the other hand, run into timidity—timidity and tenuity are the wide extremes. Numerous building societies are now on foot, proceeding upon a principle far advanced from the simple usage of the building clubs of our acquaintance of late years,—proceeding, in fact, upon a great, and, we say it seriously, a grand principle,—a grand principle, in our estimation, for the good of the commonwealth.

We have before us the prospectus of a **FREEHOLD ASSURANCE COMPANY** which we shall not trespass upon our readers to reprint entire, but we cannot refrain from transferring from it to our pages the **GOLDEN MAXIM**, if we may so call it, which is embraced in the second paragraph:—

One extension of the Life Assurance principle—a more obvious one—is the securing to the tenant the ultimate freehold of the property for which for a period of years, or from year to year, he has engaged to pay an annual consideration; and thus enabling him to look forward to the absolute possession of an unburdened property, which he may bequeath to his children.

This is it!—give us the thoroughly equitable principle of a well-calculated Life Assurance, and we will hazard our lives for it that the capitalist who presides over such an Institution, as well as the assurers who seek its protection, will each reap their rich and well-merited reward.

Let us state a case. The industrious thriving tenant of a small holding, say a house of the value of 300*l.*, for which he pays a rent of 20*l.* to 25*l.*, is desirous of retaining the spot and tenement in which he is sowing the seeds of a permanent connexion—his landlord values the freehold at less to his mind than the 300*l.* in possession—and is willing to part with it to his tenant for the sum named. The Mutual Assurance Society will for the annual payment of 22*l.* 10*s.* per annum, on a life of

thirty, become the mortgagees of the property, so that the freehold rests at once in the insurer, and reverts to his family clear of all incumbrance at his death. We can imagine nothing more attractive to the man of thrift and foresight, or any thing calculated to enlist the sympathies and interest of his family, or to stimulate to greater exertion.

It has been well said by a friend to this plan—that the best interests of "OLD ENGLAND" are enlisted in it. Small freeholds are the mainstay of England's greatness—and by a plan like this you encourage to such a state of things—you once more make it the pride and the privilege of an Englishman to possess and be prepared to defend his hearth and his home.

Be it understood, that the plan is applicable alike to freehold plots, small farms, and to houses and tenements. We have a captivating plan in our view, but we must not, while we comment on *bona fide* propositions, intimate any schemes of our own. There is, however, and in due time we have to propound it, something, based on the principle of the matter we have pointed out, forcibly attractive to every aspirant to the possession of the beau-ideal of an Englishman's home, be his station never so humble or lowly.

MODEL OF ST. PETER'S, ROME.

In our sixteenth number we gave, in conjunction with an exterior and interior view of that almost immortal church of St. Peter's, a cursory description of the model which was then and is still exhibiting in Pall Mall. In returning to the matter, as we may in justice do, for the sake of enlargement on our former notice, as well as for the benefit of our readers who may not have seen that notice, we are desirous of offering some observations on the subject of models generally, and on the spirit with which they should be examined and inspected.

Before we enter upon this part of our task, however, we may let our readers into the secret, that this model, whatever it may be in priority of beautiful and minute description, accuracy of finish, and careful detail, it is not first in the date of execution perhaps by many, many times. There is a model now preserved in the church itself, and this model is in itself a building; it was made by one Labacco, under the celebrated architect, San Gulin, and is stated to have cost upwards of 4,000 crowns, a large sum for Rome, and in those days—that is early in the sixteenth century. Considerable time, we dare say, was spent upon this model; not so however with a subsequent one, made under the direction of that glorious and disinterested sovereign in his art, Michael Angelo, who undertook his work in the direction of that great structure without pay, and received none, it being sufficient for his ambition that he should work, as he said, for the "glory of God" alone; this model, however, was made, we are told, in fifteen days, at an expense of twenty-five crowns, but we apprehend it could only have been roughly executed, and for the mere purpose of showing the alterations which Michael Angelo proposed to make in the original design, now that he had succeeded to the direction of the structure. Talking of succession, and quoting the names of San Gallo and Michael Angelo, leads one involuntarily to the consideration of the vastness of that edifice of which they, with several other men of great fame, were the architects, and who, with several other popes before and in succession, were the patrons and projectors, of that edifice which cost Rome's treasury, from first to last, without the alterations, nearly two million pounds sterling.

And it is necessary to take all these things into consideration before or while we look at models such as this. Considerations of this class are the lights through which, and the points of view from whence, observation should be made of models of great structures. To be sure we may marvel at the extent of labour

which this elaborate work of art reveals. We may walk round and feast the eye with inquisitive familiarity into each feature; bring the little organ of vision into immediate contact with each column, and that superb row of columns of which there are some two hundred and sixty! forming the mere colonnade of this colossal temple! Yes, two hundred and sixty columns, each of five feet diameter and forty feet high, forming the *corrie* or mere boundary of an entrance court to the cathedral; these we may scan over with as much of facility as we would bring to the examination of the veriest toy or plaything; but if we so scan and so consider this extraordinary work as to take no more into account than that which reveals itself in the ingenuity and handicraft skill of the artist—if we extend our consideration no farther than to think of the fifteen years patient labour of poor Giambatista—of the mass of maple-tree wood which he has consumed, and the aggregations of ivory statues that surmount this model in faithful resemblance of the colossal originals in marble—if these and considerations such as these alone influence us, if a feeling does not possess us of active reverence for the thing portrayed, and of active reference to it, if we cannot abstract ourselves from the wonders of the model to dwell upon those indefinable wonders of the *monstrum*, then it were but ill-bestowed labour and a waste of good time and money (though but a shilling) that led a mind of this calibre to disparage a great conception by its empty and petty inappreciability.

It is hard, however, to look upon a thing and get it into your head that it looks upon and frowns upon you. Although this model occupies a large space and absorbs for itself the fair central area of an exhibition-room, yet so immense is the thing represented, that the representation, large as it is in the gross and multitudinous as in the details, still it is in detail minute to almost microscopic littleness—and this was unavoidable. We pictured to ourselves before we went to visit this exhibition what that mountain of masonry might be in a model of any such capacity that man might transport from the eternal city to this, and we were prepared for much of disappointment; but having also aided ourselves by reference, as we have said, to the vast original, we were prepared to turn off in sudden indignancy if such caricature as we thought a peep-show model would make of it were here in anywise perpetrated; the fidelity, the accuracy, the beauty, the chasteness of the modelling, the ingenuity of contrivance, and all were such, however, as, conjoined, with our impressions and upraised ideas, suffered in us no repulse—the constituents of the admirable were here in such good measure and propriety, as to satiate our best desires, and fully to quell our most zealous misgivings. Our admiration of the artist was the *scena*, or the *media* which aided to the transposition of his work into the full breadth of the great original; there was no violence done to the mind—nothing to hinder its making its own diagram, and investing the model with a dignity and efficiency which the fitting contemplation of the design of St. Peter's requires.

The architect, the artist, and the artificer, all having a taste for, or engaged in, fine building, should see this model if possible; but let them go warmed up, as we say, with right feeling as to the original, or at least when they get there, let them sit in quiet contemplation until a scale has been set up in the mind suited to the admeasurement of the structure. The model is one hundredth of the life size. Let the best powers of the cypherer be applied to it; and when he looks at this diminutive and that diminutive, this relatively large, and that carrying his eye upwards to the great dome, great even in the model, let him consider what this hundredfold expansion would bring him to—an hundredfold larger, loftier, nobler, richer, so much the more superb and commanding—say, in some of its attributes following the law of physics—in lines lineal one hundred times longer, in superficies and in facial breadth as the squares, or ten thousand to one; but in the solid, ponderous majesty of the great original to the still wonderful model, as the cube or one million to one! Let the builder so view it, and he will have gained something of an adequate conception of the great St. Peter's. And, by way of further assistance to his mind, let him